



**TESTIMONY OF
JO-ANNE BASILE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CT VOTES FOR ANIMALS
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE on COMMERCE
IN OPPOSITION TO HB 5263
MARCH 1, 2022**

Co-Chairs Senator Joan Hartley and Representative Jeff Currey, Ranking Senator Henri Martin and Representative Bill Buckbee, Honorable Members of the Commerce Committee

I am Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director of CT Votes for Animals, a grass roots animal advocacy organization with members in every legislative district in the State. On behalf of the over 5500 CVA supporters we urge you to oppose HB 5263, AAC Processing of Rabbits for Food Consumption

I am appalled, as are most animal lovers in CT, that as the country recognizes the elevated role rabbits play as household pets, Connecticut has chosen to initiate a program that will expedite killing and processing of rabbits for food. If passed the legislature's action will be to institute a factory-farming like business in CT killing thousands of rabbits annually. While a small minority of the population may choose to eat rabbit meat, instituting a plan of this size and scope will put CT agriculture policy out of touch with the State's general population.

The status of rabbits has changed significantly over time. They now represent one of the 3 most common household pets after dogs and cats. Rabbits are always included in efforts to stop the sale of companion animals in pet stores. Because of their role as family pets, industry leaders like Petco and PetSmart no longer sell rabbits; instead stores include rabbits in their adoption programs along with cats and dogs. The multi-billion-dollar cosmetic industry has rapidly moved away from using rabbits in testing programs due to consumer demand. Whole Foods market made an attempt to sell rabbit meat and immediately stopped it within a year due to complaints from customers. The growth of plant-based foods should not be ignored. CT's Department of Agriculture should be promoting this form of innovation if it wants to make CT's farming relevant in the 21 Century. Lastly, and importantly, the Department of Agriculture does not have the capacity to successfully monitor new agricultural practices. With little oversight, rabbits are unlikely to receive any humane protections. From our experience DOAG appears overloaded

with animal cruelty complaints and we suggest they address existing work before venturing into new areas.

On behalf of all of CT Votes for Animals' voters we urge you to vote no on HB 5263.

Thank you,

Jo-Anne Basile

PO Box 1012, Bloomfield CT 06002

info@ctvotesforanimals.org